

VZCZCXRO4434
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHKU #0370/01 0970605
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 060605Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1128
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEFHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KUWAIT 000370

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP AND NEA/I
DHS FOR T. WARRICK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/24/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KCIP](#) [KDRG](#) [KTFN](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: SECRETARY CHERTOFF DISCUSSES CT WITH KUWAITI
LEADERSHIP (MARCH 24-25, 2008)

REF: A. KUWAIT 337
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 313
[1](#)C. STATE 07443
[1](#)D. KUWAIT 320

Classified By: CDA Alan G. Misenheimer for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) During a March 24-25 visit to Kuwait, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff met with Kuwait's Amir, Crown Prince, PM, FM, MinDef and National Security Bureau President (NSB) to discuss counterterrorism and information sharing, Iran and Iraq, Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection and the USG's "Secure Borders, Open Doors" policy. Chertoff obtained the Amir's approval to begin development of a Passenger Name Record system for Kuwait, and both sides agreed to an exchange of experts within the next 2-3 weeks to investigate its implementation.

[1](#)2. (C) The Amir renewed his call for the repatriation of Kuwait's four remaining Guantanamo detainees. The PM expressed his concerns about potential Iraqi refugees from southern Iraq and reiterated GOK opposition to a U.S. military strike on Iran. The FM said global restrictions on Islamic charities risked denying aid to the needy, and that terrorist organizations were now filling that role. He also commented on the insulting manner in which the SARG had delivered its Arab League Summit invitation to PM Fouad Siniora. NSB President Ahmed Al-Fahed raised GOK concerns about the treatment of Arabs at U.S. ports of entry. End summary.

Initial Activities

[1](#)3. (C) On March 24, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff viewed Kuwait's northern border with Iraq from the Khabari Crossing to the Khor Abdullah via helicopter with GOK and Embassy officials. The tour included a detailed Customs briefing at the Khabari Crossing. Later in the day, the Secretary met with members of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students and participated in a press round table with twelve local journalists at the Embassy. The following day, the Secretary visited Good Morning Kuwait for an early-morning television interview, and then went into a series of late-morning and early-afternoon meetings with senior GOK leadership.

March 25 Meeting Participants

¶4. (C) On March 25, Secretary Chertoff met with the Amir of Kuwait, Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al Sabah; the Crown Prince, Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al Sabah; the Prime Minister, Shaykh Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al Sabah; the Foreign Minister, Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al Sabah; the Minister of Defense and First Deputy Prime Minister, Shaykh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah and National Security Bureau President Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahed Al-Ahmed Al Sabah. MOI U/S LTG Ahmed Al-Rujaib and Kuwaiti Ambassador to the U.S. Shaykh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al Sabah also attended each of the meetings. CDA Misenheimer, DHS Chief of Staff Chad Sweet, DHS Middle East Policy Advisor Thomas Warrick, DHS A/S for Public Affairs Ed Fox and poloff attended on the U.S. side.

Counterterrorism

¶5. (C) Secretary Chertoff discussed DHS's Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) systems with the GOK senior leadership and offered to help develop a similar system for Kuwait. The Secretary explained that PNR collects passenger data such as addresses, telephone numbers, and credit card information from airline records, which DHS analysts then analyze for potential terrorist connections. Chertoff said DHS could collect and analyze this information up to 72 hours before take-off, and that the USG would be willing to share its findings, subject to arrangements for handling such information, with the GOK. The Amir, PM and

KUWAIT 00000370 002 OF 004

NSB President all agreed that this would be useful for Kuwait. Secretary Chertoff offered an exchange of experts to begin studying and implementing the system, which the PM recommended begin "immediately." (Note: DHS proposed to initiate the first exchange of experts within 2-3 weeks. End note.)

¶6. (C) The Secretary expressed the USG's extreme concern about terrorist financing and said America wanted to help prevent Kuwait from becoming a terror finance platform. The Amir said all GOK ministries are carefully watching the flow of money in Kuwait and praised the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL) for its strong oversight of Islamic charities. NSB President Shaykh Ahmed promised to continue providing the USG with actionable intelligence. The Minister of Defense, marching to the beat of a different drum, claimed that there were no dangerous individuals in Kuwait and that Kuwait was "not a land of terror financiers." (Note: MOSAL has been ineffective in controlling the final destination of charitable contributions and the USG suspects some Kuwaiti charities directly finance terrorist organizations. In addition, the UNSC 1267 Committee recently designated three Kuwaiti nationals as terror financiers (ref C). End note.)

¶7. (C) FM Mohammed Al Sabah lamented that U.S.-led international efforts to restrict Islamic charities risked denying aid to the needy. He added that charities could be powerful tools to fight terrorism and that the "crackdown on official charities" has harmed the U.S. image and created a vacuum that is now being filled by Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, especially in Africa. CDA pointed out that any "crackdown" was aimed only at illegitimate charities, and that legitimate groups should welcome measures that would clearly distinguish them from terrorist entities.

Guantanamo Detainees

¶8. (C) The Amir raised the issue of the remaining four Kuwaiti Guantanamo detainees with the Secretary. He noted their long detention without trial, asked for their release,

and said the GOK would ensure they no longer posed a threat to U.S. interests. The Secretary relayed U.S. concerns about the detainees' potential recidivism and the GOK's ability to effectively monitor their activities. Chertoff said two of the four detainees would soon face trial in the U.S., but promised to relay the Amir's request to Secretary of Defense Gates.

¶9. (C) PM Nasser Al Sabah, speaking on the same subject, cautioned that "this is a big issue for us," but allowed that U.S. courts "will have their say." Interestingly, Shaykh Nasser recounted that, during a recent GOK official visit to Guantanamo Bay, the Kuwaiti GTMO detainees refused to meet with their country's delegation. He attributed this to the detainees' long detention and poor mental state. (Note: AMB Salem was a strong proponent of this visit, which took place on March 18. End note.)

Lebanon/Kuwait Attendance at the Arab Summit

¶10. (C) The FM said he discussed the upcoming Arab League Damascus Summit with Lebanese PM Fouad Siniora on March 24. He said that, according to Siniora, the SARG invitation to Damascus was "awkward," and was deliberately intended to be insulting. The FM said the manner of the invitation was a clear indication that a Lebanese representative would not be welcome at the summit.

¶11. (C) CDA cited U.S. policy on the summit and asked if the GOK's level of representation was still under review. Shaykh Mohammed said the GOK carefully deliberated the composition of its delegation to Damascus, but in the end decided the Amir would lead. He expressed frustration with the whole matter and doubted that the summit would produce positive results, saying that without agreement between Saudi Arabia and Syria, there can be no solution to the crisis in Lebanon. The FM concluded that the Amir would be on the ground in Damascus only very briefly before proceeding to an official visit to Turkey.

KUWAIT 00000370 003 OF 004

Iraq

¶12. (C) Secretary Chertoff expressed the USG's desire to see economic conditions improve in southern Iraq and asked the Amir whether Kuwait would soon be importing more Iraqi commodities. The Amir said "we haven't prevented this," but then implied that Kuwait did not need Iraqi imports since it was satisfied with its existing trading partners. The Amir cited current violence in Basra and the possibility of refugee flows as reasons why Kuwait would not be relaxing its border controls with Iraq. The PM echoed this point, and said Kuwait had neither the infrastructure nor the personnel to deal with Iraqi refugees. He also expressed GOK fear of armed Basrawi militias infiltrating Kuwait.

Iran

¶13. (C) The PM reiterated Kuwait's objection to an American military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, predictably couching the GOK's argument in environmental terms. He opined that Iran had strategically placed 8 of its nuclear facilities near borders with neighboring countries and commented that the Bushehr facility is now in "an advanced state." Shaykh Nasser said "peace and dialogue is the only option," and called for the U.S. to allow IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei enough time to achieve a peaceful solution to the standoff, noting that he is the only individual whom all sides trust. Secretary Chertoff reassured the PM that America is also seeking a peaceful solution, but advised that the USG would remain firm on this issue and that it could not accept a nuclear-armed Iran.

CEIP

¶14. (C) Secretary Chertoff raised Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection (CEIP) with Shaykh Ahmed and noted specific Al-Qaeda threats against the region's energy infrastructure. Charge referenced the recently-concluded Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) (ref A), which included CEIP discussions, and called for a mechanism to broaden our bilateral cooperation in this area. (Note: During the GSD, the GOK said it would not sign a long-pending MOU with the U.S. on CEIP, as no such agreement was needed to allow for closer cooperation, more information sharing, and an exchange of experts. End note). Shaykh Ahmed said he shared USG concerns about potential Al-Qaeda or Iranian attacks against Kuwait's energy infrastructure. Nevertheless, he claimed that Kuwait had already implemented "70 percent" of the USG's CEIP recommendations and declined further discussion of a CEIP MOU. (Note: To date, the GOK has taken a strictly hardware-centric approach to CEIP and has not implemented any of the more complex, inter-ministerial, systemic upgrades recommended by the USG. End note.)

Secure Borders, Open Doors

¶15. (C) NSB President Ahmed Al-Fahed cautioned that U.S. security procedures at its ports of entry were "destroying" America's image. He said Kuwaitis were opting to travel and study elsewhere and asked what the U.S. was doing to remedy this problem. Secretary Chertoff said the USG shares Kuwait's concern about this issue, but offered that such negative perceptions had not kept pace with reality. He cited the return of tourist travel to pre-9/11 levels, as well as improvements in the visa issuance and immigration processes. Nevertheless, the Secretary promised to investigate ways to improve traveler amenities, especially in secondary inspection areas. He also noted that improved biometric procedures and the increased use of e-passports would reduce the number of travelers referred to secondary inspection.

¶16. (C) The FM queried Secretary Chertoff on U.S.-Mexico border control efforts. Shaykh Mohammed showed great interest in the USG's use of unmanned aerial vehicles and ground-based radar to monitor its border and noted the

KUWAIT 00000370 004 OF 004

similarities in terrain between Kuwait and parts of the American Southwest. The FM responded positively to a DHS invitation to have Kuwaiti officials observe technical demonstrations in the U.S. Shaykh Mohammed said Kuwait had installed observation posts every three kilometers along its border, and that MOI border guards utilize infrared sights with an effective range of five kilometers. According to the FM, these posts have direct communications with roving guards.

Domestic Politics

¶17. (C) FM Dr. Mohammed explained the Amir's March 19 decision to dissolve Parliament (ref D), saying that Kuwaiti MPs had become obsessed with pork barrel legislation and constituent grandstanding. He added that the GOK was committed to limiting the role of tribes in the May 17 elections since they have proven to be too parochial and myopic. The PM, commenting on the upcoming elections, said he was hoping women would comprise 10-12 percent of the new Parliament. (Note: Kuwaiti analysts at this point generally predict that no women will be elected in the upcoming elections, noting that the new 5 electoral district system reduces their chances. End note.)

***** *

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
[http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s](http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable%20s)

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>
***** *
Lenderking